

A Study of the Christ Text

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Witness of Jesus' death	27:51-56	15:38-41	23:45b-49	
Burial	27:57-60	15:42-45	23:50-54	19:31-42
Tomb watched	27:61-66	15:47	23:55-56	
Empty Tomb	28:1-8	16:1-8	24:1-12	20:1-10

Overriding Principles

- Jesus' mission could not be accomplished apart from His atoning death.
- The empty tomb is the greatest testimony to the truthfulness of Christianity.
- Without the Resurrection, Christianity is a vain religion.
- The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus provide the reasons for our belief.
- Commitment to Jesus is the required consequence to our belief.

Commentary

Witnesses of Jesus' Death (Matt. 27:51-56; Mk. 15:38-41; Lk. 23:45b-49)

- Because of Christ's sacrifice, as symbolized by the torn curtain of the temple, a new closer relationship with God became possible.
 - The curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.
 - The Most Holy Place had highly restricted access—the High Priest entered twice on the Day of Atonement.
- The “holy people” raised up from the dead would have offered their testimony in support of Jesus.
 - This was similar to the appearance of Moses and Elijah in the Transfiguration.
 - They may have departed shortly, much as did Elijah and Moses.
- Many women followed along with Jesus in His ministry—the fear that caused the men to flee was not found in them.
 - These women probably at least partially funded Jesus' missionary of outreach (cf. Lk. 8:1-3).
 - Mary Magdalene (from Magdala, to help distinguish among the three ladies named Mary associated closely with Jesus).
 - There is no evidence to link Mary with having been a prostitute.
 - Her name being mentioned first, does, however, probably indicate she was a leader of the women who traveled with Jesus.
 - “The other Mary” was most likely the mother of James the son of Alphaeus aka James the Less (cf. Matt. 10:3).
 - Salome is the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee.
 - Possibly Jesus' mother's sister (cf. Jn. 19:25).

- If this is correct, and there is a grammatical uncertainty in the text just cited, James and John would have been cousins.
 - This would explain why she petitioned Jesus on behalf of her sons; a kinship obligation may have been assumed or expected (cf. I Kg. 1:15-21; II Sam. 14:2-20).
- The centurion's response "Surely this man was the Son of God," should be understood in the contemporary setting.
 - Some of the Caesars were called "son of god."
 - The phrase was also used of conquerors.
 - The centurion thus used the highest title Rome offered to, of all men, an executed Jew!
- Additionally, the centurion set the record straight—Jesus was a righteous or innocent man.
 - A Roman saw what most Jews did not.
 - Similar could be said of Pilate.

The Burial of Jesus (Matt. 27:57-60; Mk. 15:42-46; Lk. 23:50-54; Jn. 19:38-42)

- The Jewish custom was to remove bodies before evening; this would have been particularly true of the day before the Sabbath of Passover Week.
 - The Romans enjoyed leaving bodies hanging for long periods of time—at times never allowing them to be buried.
 - Pilate, therefore, was asked to grant a special request.
- Preparation Day was the day before a Sabbath when needful preparations were made for the workless Sabbath day to follow.
- Joseph of Arimathea (exact location of his hometown debated) was a rich man who had become a disciple of Jesus.
 - A member of the Sanhedrin, as was Nicodemus.
 - Many Jews were looking for the coming of the Kingdom of God and thus would have been open to the claims of Jesus (cf. Mk. 15:43; Lk. 23:50-51; Jn. 3:1-15; 19:38).
- Joseph's asking Pilate to bury Jesus in his tomb fulfilled Isaiah 53:9.
- There was haste not only because the Sabbath approached, but executed men were also to be buried the same day as their death, so the land would not be defiled (Deut. 23:50-51).
- The Jews did not embalm, they wrapped bodies in linen.
 - The heavy weight of the anointing spices, 65 pounds, was used to mask the smell of decay. Spice coated strips wrapped the body.
 - Then the entrance to the tomb was covered with spices.
 - Washing the body, considered by the Jews to be of greatest importance, is not mentioned by any of the gospel writers.
- Washing the body, considered by the Jews to be of greatest importance, is not mentioned by any of the gospel writers.
- Among the wealthier Jews, when the flesh decayed, about one to three years, the bones were then placed in an ossuary (bone box).

- The tomb would have been a rectangular chamber carved out of a rock face.
- The fact it was a “new” tomb was appropriate for the occasion—Jesus’ death was unlike any other.
- Additionally, dead bodies were associated with defilement—Jesus tomb was undefiled.
- The stones used to seal tombs varied, but round stones, similar to a millstone, were frequently employed.

The Tomb Watched (Matt. 27:61-66; Mk. 15:47; Lk. 23:55-56)

- The Jewish leaders had a special meeting with Pilate on the Sabbath.
 - As long as they did not travel more than the legal limit for a Sabbath’s journey (Ex. 16:29) or enter the residence of Pilate (cf. Jn. 18:28), the delegation would not break the Sabbath (cf. Acts 1:12).
 - They were very scrupulous about matters of ceremonial defilement, but quite willing to “lynch” an innocent man.
- The Jews would have been given permission to use the same troops to secure His tomb as had been previously employed to arrest Jesus.
- Sealing the tomb put Rome’s guarantee on securing its contents.
- The troops not only stood by to protect the tomb; their failure to do so would mean their execution.
- The family and friends of Jesus waited until after the Sabbath for an opportunity to prepare properly Jesus’ body for burial—unaware of the work done by Nicodemus and Joseph.

The Empty Tomb (Matt. 28:1-8; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:1-12; Jn. 20:1-10)

- Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the Less very courageously went to the tomb to complete Jesus’ burial preparations.
- Mary the mother of Jesus, Salome, Joanna, and Susanna were in the group of women associated with the crucifixion and burial, but apparently were somewhat farther behind.
- Physical phenomenon is at the disposal of God’s providence.
- The women would did not have sufficient strength to move the stone, indicating its great weight and the difficulty involved in opening the tomb.
- Angels are often associated with light indicating their pronounced purity (cf. Jud. 13:19-20)
- .Women become the first humans to herald the Resurrection.
- The differences in the gospel accounts reflect the different arrival times of the women in the group.
- The “third day” need not be taken to mean anything more than parts of three different days (cf. Hos. 6:2).
- The linen strips encountered in the tomb would preclude robbery of the body—too much time needed to unwrap a body.
- The face cloth folded up separately is another interesting aspect to the appearance of the burial chamber.

- This was used to keep the mouth closed.
- Apparently, Jesus removed it after breaking from His other grave clothes.
- John, younger than Peter, was the faster of the two.
- The evidence was conclusive; Simon and John are brought to belief.
- Belief must always be based on evidence.
- They did not know what to do next, so they went home.

Who is Jesus?

- He is the Resurrection and the Life.
- He conquered death.
- He is Lord!